

AMENDMENT AND RESPONSE TO OFFICE ACTION
AND PETITION FOR EXTENSION OF TIME
U.S. Serial No. 09/863,933

AMENDMENTS IN THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) An improved method for molding three-dimensional products from a mass of foodstuff which is suitable for human consumption[,]] comprising the steps of:

- a. filling at least one mold cavity having at least one opening with a portion of a mass of foodstuff via the at least one opening, wherein a filling pressure is exerted on the mass for a filling period;
- b. closing the at least one opening of the mold cavity;
- c. retaining the mass in the closed mold cavity for a fixing period, wherein for at least a portion of the fixing period a fixing pressure, capable of being varied during the fixing period, is exerted on the mass to form a molded product; and
- d. opening the mold cavity and removing the molded product.

2. Cancelled.

3. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the fixing pressure is greater than the filling pressure.

4. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the duration of the fixing period is independent of the duration of the filling period.

AMENDMENT AND RESPONSE TO OFFICE ACTION
AND PETITION FOR EXTENSION OF TIME
U.S. Serial No. 09/863,933

5. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the fixing pressure exerted on the mass is substantially eliminated before the mold cavity is opened.

6. (Cancelled).

7. (Cancelled).

8. (Cancelled).

9. (Cancelled).

10. (Cancelled).

11. (Cancelled).

12. (Cancelled).

13. (Cancelled).

14. (Cancelled).

AMENDMENT AND RESPONSE TO OFFICE ACTION
AND PETITION FOR EXTENSION OF TIME
U.S. Serial No. 09/863,933

15. (Cancelled).

16. (Cancelled).

17. (Cancelled).

18. (Cancelled).

19. (Cancelled).

20. (Cancelled).

21. (Cancelled).

22. (Cancelled).

23. (Cancelled).

24. (Cancelled).

25. (Cancelled).

AMENDMENT AND RESPONSE TO OFFICE ACTION
AND PETITION FOR EXTENSION OF TIME
U.S. Serial No. 09/863,933

26. (Cancelled).

27. (Cancelled).

28. (Cancelled).

29. (Cancelled).

30. (Cancelled).

31. (Cancelled).

32. (Cancelled).

33. (Cancelled).

34. (Cancelled).

35. (Cancelled).

36. (Cancelled).

AMENDMENT AND RESPONSE TO OFFICE ACTION
AND PETITION FOR EXTENSION OF TIME
U.S. Serial No. 09/863,933

37. (Cancelled).

38. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the method further comprises providing a drum moving along a path and comprising a drum wall, wherein the at least one mold cavity is positioned in the drum wall.

39. (Currently Amended) The method of claim [[1]] 38, wherein filling the at least one mold cavity further comprises providing at least one mass-feed component adapted to be positioned adjacent the drum for feeding mass into the at least one mold cavity.

40. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein removing the molded product comprises using separating means to remove the molded product projecting from the mold cavity.

41. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 39, wherein the drum further comprises a first surface and a second surface, wherein the at least one opening comprises a first opening positioned along the first surface of the drum and a second opening positioned along the second surface of the drum.

AMENDMENT AND RESPONSE TO OFFICE ACTION
AND PETITION FOR EXTENSION OF TIME
U.S. Serial No. 09/863,933

42. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 41, wherein the mass-feed component comprises at least one compartment having a feed opening adjacent the first opening of the mold cavity to feed mass into the mold cavity and wherein closing the at least one opening of the mold cavity comprises providing a closure component for at least temporarily closing the second opening of the mold cavity.

43. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 38, wherein closing the at least one opening of the mold cavity comprises positioning a belt adjacent at least a portion of the drum wall to at least temporarily close the at least one mold cavity.

44. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 43, further comprising applying pressure to at least a portion of the belt so that the belt bears against at least a portion of the drum wall and exerts a fixing pressure on the mass.

45. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising positioning a first film in at least a portion of the at least one mold cavity before mass is fed into the cavity.

46. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 45, further comprising positioning a second film over the mass which is fed into the at least one mold cavity.

AMENDMENT AND RESPONSE TO OFFICE ACTION
AND PETITION FOR EXTENSION OF TIME
U.S. Serial No. 09/863,933

47. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising positioning a first film to at least partially cover the at least one opening of the at least one mold cavity after mass is fed into the at least one mold cavity.

48. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising subjecting the mass to a pressurized medium to exert a fixing pressure on the mass enclosed in the at least one mold cavity.

49. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 An improved method for molding three-dimensional products from a mass of foodstuff which is suitable for human consumption comprising:

a. filling at least one mold cavity having at least one opening with a portion of a mass of foodstuff via the at least one opening, wherein the at least one mold cavity comprises an adjustable base and has a cavity volume that varies depending on the position of the base, wherein the mold cavity has:

- i. a first volume when the base is positioned in a first position before mass is fed into the cavity;
- ii. a second volume when the base is positioned in a second position after mass has been fed into the cavity but before the cavity opening has been closed; and
- iii. a third volume when the base is positioned in a third position after the cavity opening has been closed,

AMENDMENT AND RESPONSE TO OFFICE ACTION
AND PETITION FOR EXTENSION OF TIME
U.S. Serial No. 09/863,933

wherein the second volume is greater than the first volume and the third volume and
wherein a filling pressure is exerted on the mass for a filling period;

b. closing the at least one opening of the mold cavity;

c. retaining the mass in the closed mold cavity for a fixing period, wherein for at least a portion of the fixing period a fixing pressure is exerted on the mass to form a molded product; and

d. opening the mold cavity and removing the molded product.

50. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the at least one mold cavity is at least partially lined with a substantially flexible membrane and wherein removing the molded product comprises applying a pressurized medium to the flexible membrane to eject the molded product from the at least one mold cavity.

51. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein removing the molded product comprises subjecting the mass to a pressurized medium to eject the molded product from the at least one mold cavity.

52. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 39, wherein the at least one mass-feed component comprises a first mass-feed component positioned along the path for feeding a first mass into the at least one mold cavity and a second mass-feed component positioned

AMENDMENT AND RESPONSE TO OFFICE ACTION
AND PETITION FOR EXTENSION OF TIME
U.S. Serial No. 09/863,933

along the path downstream of the first mass-feed component for feeding a second mass into the at least one mold cavity.

53. (Currently Amended) ~~The method of claim 52, further comprising An improved method for molding three-dimensional products from a mass of foodstuff which is suitable for human consumption comprising:~~

a. filling at least one mold cavity having at least one opening with a portion of a mass of foodstuff via the at least one opening, wherein the at least one filling cavity is positioned in a drum wall of a drum moving along a path and wherein filling the at least one mold cavity comprises providing at least one mass-feed component adapted to be positioned adjacent the drum for feeding mass into the at least one mold cavity, the at least one mass-feed component comprising a first mass-feed component positioned along the path for feeding a first mass into the at least one mold cavity and a second mass-feed component positioned along the path downstream of the first mass-feed component for feeding a second mass into the at least one mold cavity, and wherein a filling pressure is exerted on the mass for a filling period;

b. forming a hollow in the mass which has been fed into the mold cavity by the first mass-feed component and introducing a filling into the hollow before feeding the second mass into the at least one mold cavity;

c. closing the at least one opening of the mold cavity;

AMENDMENT AND RESPONSE TO OFFICE ACTION
AND PETITION FOR EXTENSION OF TIME
U.S. Serial No. 09/863,933

d. retaining the mass in the closed mold cavity for a fixing period, wherein for at least a portion of the fixing period a fixing pressure is exerted on the mass to form a molded product; and

e. opening the mold cavity and removing the molded product.

Please add the following new claims:

54. (New) The method of claim 45, wherein the at least one mold cavity comprises a shape and wherein the method further comprises reducing the pressure in the at least one mold cavity so that at least a portion of the film conforms to the shape of the at least one mold cavity.

55. (New) The method of claim 38, wherein the at least one mold cavity comprises a shape and wherein the method further comprises positioning at least a portion of a belt that extends at least partially around the drum wall in at least a portion of the at least one mold cavity before mass is fed into the cavity and reducing the pressure in the at least one mold cavity so that at least a portion of the belt conforms to the shape of the at least one mold cavity.

AMENDMENT AND RESPONSE TO OFFICE ACTION
AND PETITION FOR EXTENSION OF TIME
U.S. Serial No. 09/863,933

56. (New) The method of claim 1, wherein the at least one mold cavity comprises a base comprising a substantially flexible membrane and wherein the method further comprises applying pressure to the mold cavity base during filling.

57. (New) An improved method for molding three-dimensional products from a mass of foodstuff which is suitable for human consumption comprising:

- a. providing a drum comprising a drum wall, wherein at least one mold cavity having a shape and at least one opening is positioned in the drum wall;
- b. positioning at least a portion of a film that extends at least partially around the drum wall in at least a portion of the at least one mold cavity;
- c. reducing the pressure in the at least one mold cavity so that at least a portion of the film conforms to the shape of the at least one mold cavity;
- d. filling the at least one mold cavity with a portion of a mass of foodstuff via the at least one opening, wherein a filling pressure is exerted on the mass for a filling period;
- e. closing the at least one opening of the mold cavity;
- f. retaining the mass in the closed mold cavity for a fixing period, wherein for at least a portion of the fixing period a fixing pressure is exerted on the mass to form a molded product; and
- g. opening the mold cavity and removing the molded product.

AMENDMENT AND RESPONSE TO OFFICE ACTION
AND PETITION FOR EXTENSION OF TIME
U.S. Serial No. 09/863,933

58. (New) An improved method for molding three-dimensional products from a mass of foodstuff which is suitable for human consumption comprising:

- a. providing at least one mold cavity having at least one opening and a base comprising a substantially flexible membrane;
- b. applying pressure to the mold cavity base;
- c. filling the at least one mold cavity with a portion of a mass of foodstuff via the at least one opening, wherein a filling pressure is exerted on the mass for a filling period;
- d. closing the at least one opening of the mold cavity;
- e. retaining the mass in the closed mold cavity for a fixing period, wherein for at least a portion of the fixing period a fixing pressure is exerted on the mass to form a molded product; and
- f. opening the mold cavity and removing the molded product.

59. (New) The method of claim 1, wherein the fixing pressure is varied during the fixing period.

60. (New) The method of claim 59, wherein the fixing pressure is reduced stepwise during the fixing period.

61. (New) The method of claim 44, wherein pressure is applied to at least a portion of the belt by a pressurized medium.